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WLW  
CINCINNATI

# FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

115  
P.M. - E.S.T.

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A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

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No. 190

"FARMS THAT RIDE THE WIND"

December 13, 1941

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ORGAN: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind....

ANNOUNCER

The great state of Minnesota is a land of wheat fields, of iron mines, of quarries, of dairy farms. It boasts endless miles of trackless forest, beautiful streams. It is the land of ten thousand lakes. Minnesota's landscape pattern was formed during the four invasions and retreats of gigantic glaciers which thousands of years ago moved down through the valleys, scouring ridges, polishing knolls, unloading tons of soil, and, as they finally melted, leaving depressions and dams which created innumerable lakes. The retreating ice left huge Lake Agassiz. (ANNOUNCER CONTINUES)

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ANNOUNCER (CONT'D.)

This great body of water, until the ice barring its exits had melted away, was larger than the combined Great Lakes. It occupied the northwestern part of the state and extended well into the Dakotas and Canada. Along the shoreline of this ancient glacial lake is the scene of the 190th consecutive episode of Fortunes Washed Away.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Our story today is the story of present-day farmers of Norman County, Minnesota. Our story teller is Ken Davis...(FADE)...

ORGAN: Establish theme, chorus of "CHINESE LULLABY", fading for...

NARRATOR

We were riding south from Twin Valley, one day not so long ago. This little town, somehow, seems to be "pasted on" the vast plain which stretches through western Minnesota and the Dakotas. Art Libby was at the wheel. He gestured toward a tiny figure trudging across an enormous field -- a lonely figure which looked as though it might be crushed by the weight of space around it....(FADE)

SOUND: Bring in automobile, cruising at slow speed, horn blows occasionally...

LIBBY

See that fellow? Men are like that in the front line of battle. They're erosion fighters -- men who are trying to keep the dust bowl out of Minnesota.

DAVIS

Yes, Art. You know, this big country is awesome to me. This tremendous floor of earth, and this enormous roof of sky...why it sort of reduces a man to the proportions of a mouse in a vast room.



LIBBY

Yeah, it does...sort of...at that, Ken.

DAVIS

Not much here to stop the sweep of wind.

LIBBY

No. This is flat country. Not many trees. Huge fields plowed up. That means, of course...

DAVIS (interrupting)

The farms take a ride on the wind.

LIBBY

That's right.

DAVIS

The whole country blows, does it?

LIBBY

No...not the whole country... A lot of land is protected by grass or hay, and there are a few patches of timber. See, there's some over there.

DAVIS

Yeah, I see it. But the wind erosion problem is serious?

LIBBY

Plenty. There aren't enough trees and not enough grass areas. The problem is specially serious along these sandy beaches of Lake Agassiz, where we are now.

DAVIS

Lake? Listen, Art, I can see plenty of land but not a drop of water.





LIBBY (laughing)

'Course you can't. I'm talking about an ancient glacial lake. It was a whopper in its day. And now it's a bad blow spot.

DAVIS

Well, Art, what can be done about it?

LIBBY

That's what I'm going to show you today... What we're trying to do. Wait a second, here's something interesting.

SOUND: Car comes to stop, motor shuts off... Bring in a strong wind...

LIBBY

Get out here, Art. Want to show you this. I marked the spot the other day.

SOUND: Car doors open, close...

DAVIS

Looks like the top of a fence.

LIBBY

Yeah. It's the top of a fence all right. It's the top of two fences.

DAVIS

What do you mean, Art?

LIBBY

Just what I said. Two fences, one on top of the other, have been practically buried by soil piled up by the wind.

DAVIS

Whew! I begin to see what wind erosion means around here!

LIBBY

We'll stop to see old man Vehle. He'll be a good one to start off with.

ORGAN: Brief bridge of chorus of CHINESE LULLABY...



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SOUND: Car comes to stop, doors slam as...

LIBBY

Hi there, Mr. Vehle. Meet Mr. Davis.

VEHLE

Hello, Art. Glad to meet you, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS

Howdy, Mr. Vehle.

LIBBY

Sort of showing Mr. Davis around. And you're the best informed old-timer around here I know of.

VEHLE (chuckling)

Wal, I've lived here for 53 years now. I've seen the crop yields go down and wind erosion increase.

LIBBY

You haven't lost hope, though, have you Mr. Vehle?

VEHLE

Should say not! I've got a lot of faith in this country. You know, soil blowin' didn't start till 'bout 30 years ago. And it can be stopped.

DAVIS

We'd sort of like to visit one of the farms where they're keeping the soil at home.

LIBBY

Yeah, Mr. Vehle, where'd you suggest we go?





VEHLE

Wal, there's Ingvold Hanson's farm, and Emil Lerud's, and Clarence and Milo Swenson's -- any of 'em would do, Art. Guess you know where they all are.

LIBBY

Sure do. O.K. then, see you later old-timer.

DAVIS

'Bye, Mr. Vehle.

VEHLE

So long, boys.

ORGAN: Brief bridge of chorus of CHINESE LULLABY fading for...

NARRATOR

As we drove through the county that day I was impressed by the tragic part of the whole business...that through wind erosion the farmers were losing something that couldn't be replaced -- the topsoil. I thought (REFLECTIVELY) "it took nature thousands of years to form the few inches of topsoil which grow crops. Wind erosion, uncontrolled, can remove ALL of that topsoil in just a few years." Libby broke into my thoughts....(FADE)

SOUND: Bring in auto, cruising, horn toots occasionally...

LIBBY

Over there is Ingvold Hanson's farm. He's one of the cooperators with the wind erosion control demonstration project.

DAVIS

What say we stop and have a talk with him?

LIBBY

O.K. Ken, you're the tourist and I'm the driver.

SOUND: Car comes to stop and motor shuts off as.... Bring in wind...



[The text in this block is extremely faint and illegible, appearing as a series of horizontal lines across the page.]

LIBBY

Hi, Mr. Hanson. Remember me, I'm Art Libby?

HANSON (fading in)

Oh yes, how are you?

LIBBY

This is Ken Davis.

HANSON

Hello, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS

Glad to know you.

LIBBY

What were you doing with that oil can?

HANSON

Just oilin' up the manure spreader. You know, that spreader helped me get a big loan on my place a few years ago.

DAVIS

How's that, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON

Well, the bank's land appraiser was much impressed that I had a big wood pile and no manure pile. He said that meant I was a good farmer, and he upped the value of the farm. (LAUGHTER)

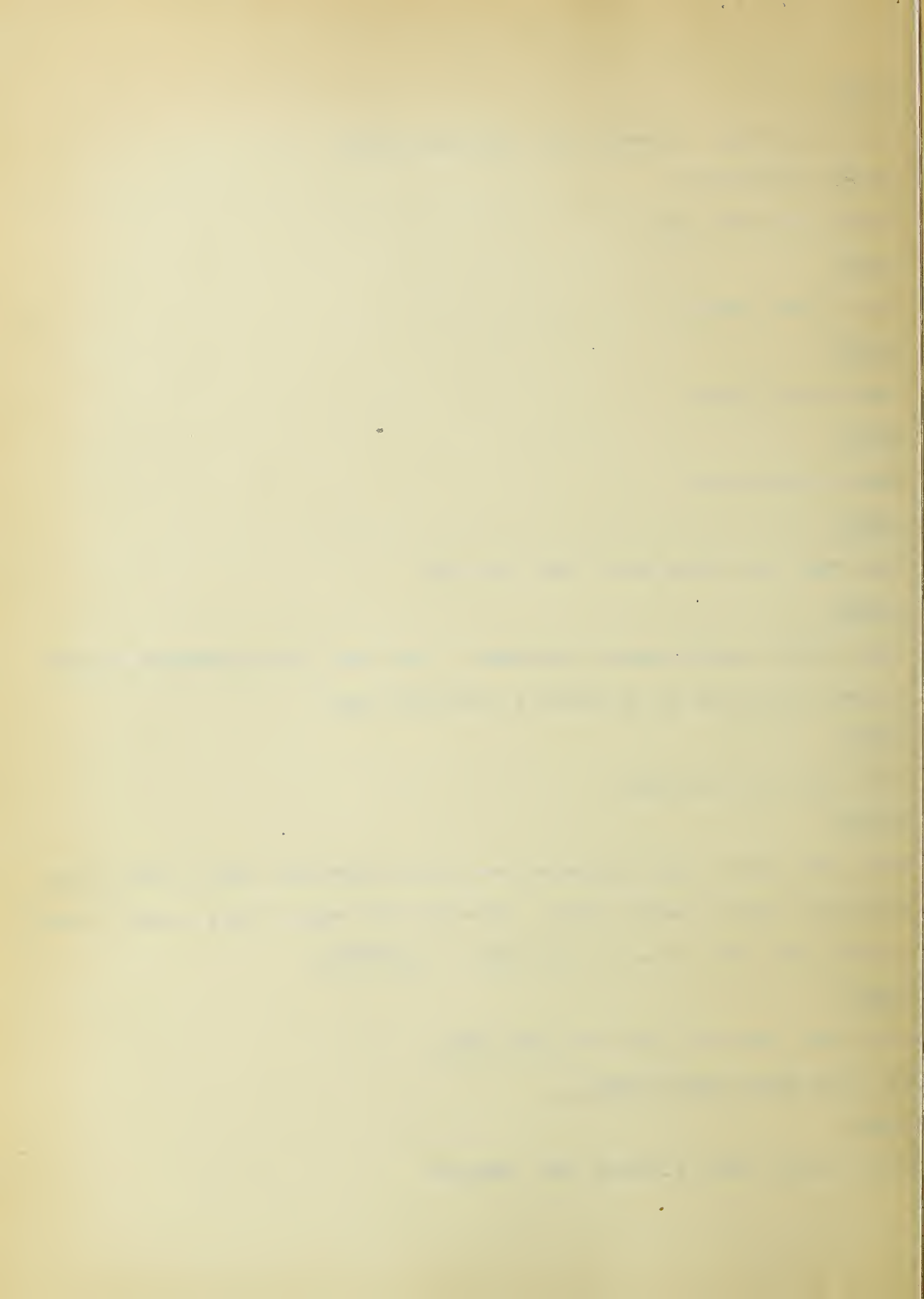
LIBBY

Let's get out and look the place over.

SOUND: Car doors open, shut...

DAVIS

Much trouble with blowing, Mr. Hanson?



HANSON

Did have, but I think we got it whipped. Anyhow, I'm here to stay. I'll never leave the farm -- just so it doesn't leave me. (LAUGHTER)

DAVIS

Say! What do you call these funny-looking machines?

HANSON

Well, this one here is a hole-digging cultivator I call a basin tiller. It scoops out cups of earth to catch wind and water. It's one of my weapons in the fight against wind erosion.

LIBBY

Tell him about the other one, Mr. Hanson.

HANSON

This one here is a cultipacker that I've rearranged. Notice how the wheels have been spread apart?

DAVIS

What's the idea of that?

HANSON

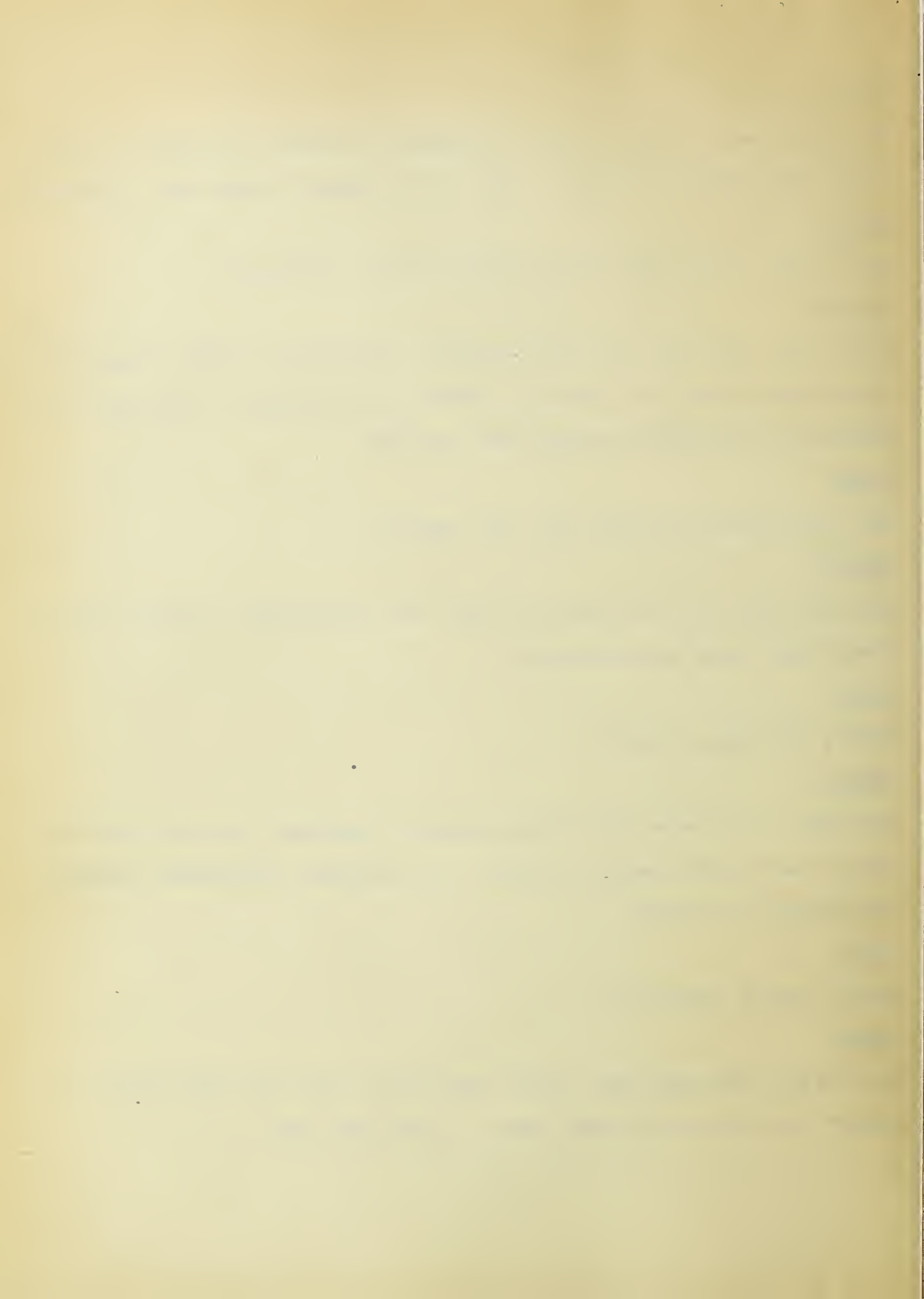
The idea is to leave the field surfaces roughened, so soil drifting doesn't have much chance to start. An ordinary cultipacker leaves the ground too smooth.

DAVIS

That's pretty ingenious.

HANSON

Oh, I'm not the only one. Emil Lerud has a one-way disk tiller. It doesn't turn the soil clear over -- just part way.





LIBBY

And plowing with it leaves the field covered by what you might call trash, which roughens the ground surface and helps break the sweep of the wind.

HANSON

That's right. And the Swenson boys use a basin lister.

LIBBY

That's a plow, Ken, that has an attachment designed to form little dams across lister furrows at regular intervals.

HANSON

Yeah. It divides the furrows into a series of cups. More water soaks in -- and of course moist soil won't blow away.

DAVIS

I take it that these adapted pieces of equipment are the things you rely on to fight the wind?

HANSON

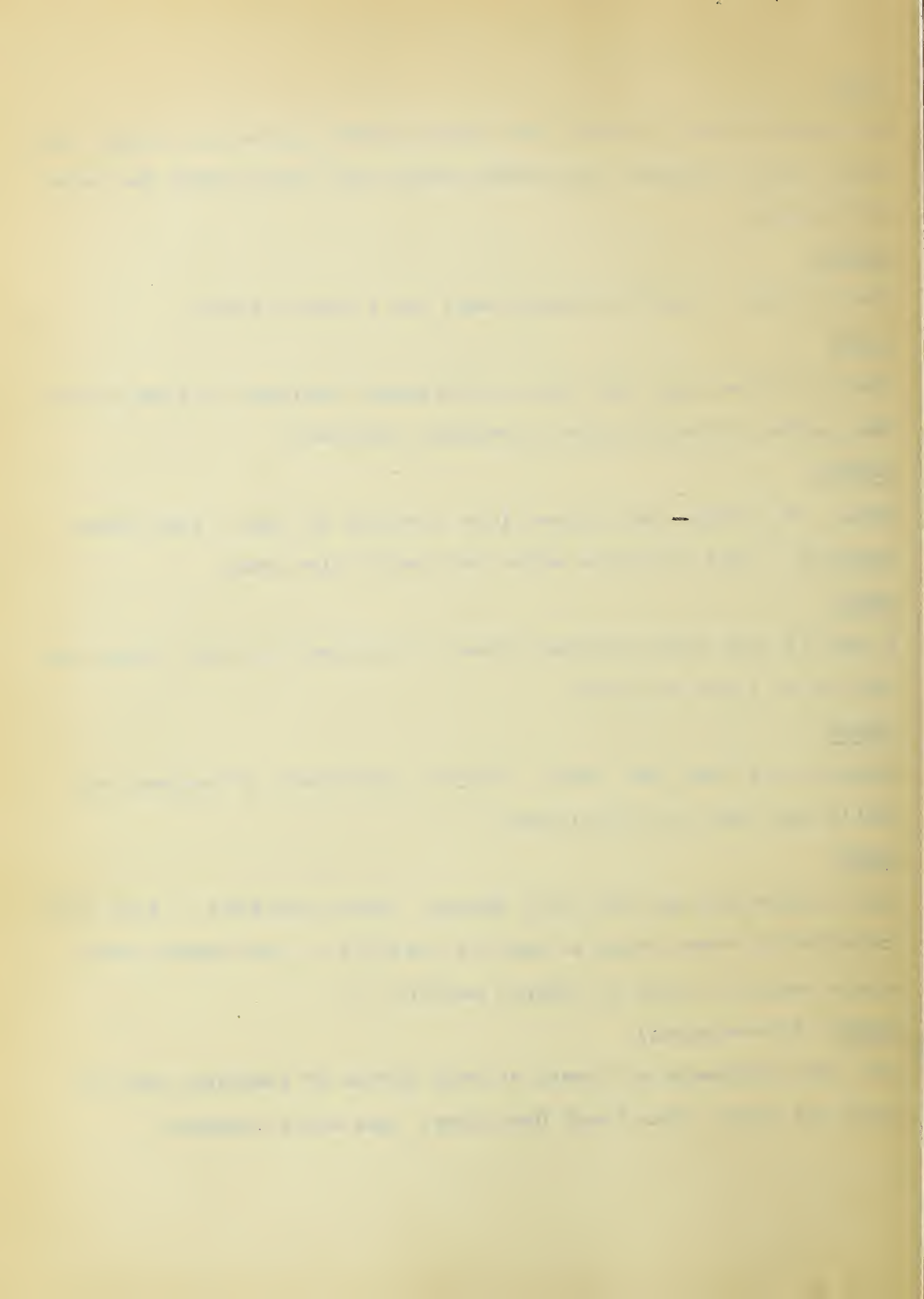
Wouldn't say that, Mr. Davis. They're important, of course, but that's only part of the picture.

LIBBY

Glad to hear you say that, Mr. Hanson. Good rotations -- keep soil protected by cover crops as much as possible -- plow under green manure crops to build up organic matter.....

HANSON (interrupting)

Yes, and windbreaks of trees, or even strips of standing corn to break the wind...like Frank Gray does. And strip croppin'.



LIBBY

'Course farmers can't seed the whole countryside to hay and grass and make a living. But they can and are seeding more of it down. And they're placing more emphasis on livestock farming, and less on grain farming. That right, Mr. Hanson?

HANSON

One hundred percent, Mr. Libby. Most of us have seen the light. And we're doin' our best to tack down the soil, to keep our farms out of the air....keep 'em down on the ground....(FADE)....

ORGAN: Sneak in chorus of CHINESE LULLABY

NARRATOR

I learned a lot that day in the Lake Agassiz country. I had seen desolate stretches of sand that gave me a rough idea of how the great deserts of northern Africa and the Near East got their start. But I saw more important things. I saw farmers united to defend their land, to save their soil. I came away convinced that these farmers are going to lick their problem -- tie down the soil for good. These men are pioneer stock. A few years ago they, or their fathers, were pioneering a physical frontier; now they're pioneering a new frontier, the frontier separating wise land use from soil exploitation. They have the stuff of which winners are made!

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER

That's the true story of farmers in Norman County, Minnesota....a story brought to you by the Nation's Station in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. And now, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture, is Hal Jenkins.





JENKINS

AD LIBS TO FILL NECESSARY TIME. And now, \_\_\_\_\_, Walter Lowdermilk's eleventh commandment.

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER.

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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